

184 In times of famine, acorns are cooked like
261 maize for *nixtamal* (boiled with lye or wood
ashes), ground, and made into *gordos*.

782 A special "bread" of maize is used as an offer-
532 ing at the house altar. This is made of maize
toquera (halfway between green and mature
corn) cooked like *nixtamal*, ground, and shaped.
It is cooked first on the *comal* and then hardened
by placing it on embers. This bread is never
eaten but is hung from strings in front of the
altar. The shapes include quadrupeds, both
with and without horns, crescent moons, and,
most interesting of all, hearts represented in
pre-Hispanic style.

184 In Parícutin a few divergences may be noted.
262 Most people eat atole flavored with nurite,
without sugar, salt, or chile every morning.
The wild crab apple is not eaten at all. The
diet of many poor people consists almost wholly
of atole and tortillas with chile sauce; this is
spoken of as "eating dry," "*se come a secas*."

In San Juan Parangaricutiro, the Mestizoized
cabecera for Angáhuán and Parícutin, the
favorite atole is *atole de grano*, made of tender
green maize, seasoned with green chile and an
herb called *anisillo*. The atole is colored green
with ground squash leaves. This atole is made
especialy during Holy Week. (Because of the
lower elevations, the region of San Juan has
green maize much of the year.) Wheat bran
is used to make a type of *gordos*. Pulque,
[273] mixed with chile sauce, is drunk during the
rainy season. *Agua miel* without flavoring is
drunk also.

EATING CUSTOMS

264 Eating habits seem to vary little from town
to town. In Cherán food is served on tables
only on special occasions by the more sophisti-
cated, especially when an outsider is present.
Usually, the persons being served sit on low
stools or benches, holding the main dish in their
hands. Tortillas, tamales, salt, and other foods
or condiments are placed in baskets or dishes
on the floor.

Generally the women eat last, but this is pri-
marily due to the necessity of constantly warm-
ing or cooking tortillas rather than to any
feeling of propriety. If there be more than
one woman in the household, one or more may
begin to eat with the men after the rush of

[P. 34-a]

241 The Tarascans, like many aboriginal groups
177 strongly influenced by European culture, engage
in two types of agriculture: field agriculture and
horticulture. The former comprises extensive
cultivation of grains in comparatively large fields
with the plow and in small hillside plots with the
hoe. Tarascan horticulture includes mainly the
intensive cultivation of grains, vegetables, medic-
inal plants, and fruits in the house-lot gardens
(ekuáru, sing., ekuáruéča, pl., hispanicized to
ecuario); it also includes specialized truck garden-
ing, such as that practiced on the shores of Lake
Pátzcuaro.

FIELD AGRICULTURE AND ASSOCIATED CROPS

241 There are three basic native food crops of
261 Mexico: maize (starch and oil), beans (protein),
and squash (vegetable vitamin), all of which are
now associated with field agriculture. In most
Indian and many mestizo communities this com-
plex forms the principal elements in the common
diet; the three crops are planted together in the
same field, cultivated together in the same man-
ner, and harvested about the same time.

243 **Maize culture.**—The earliest record of maize in
[172] the Tarascan area is found in the charred ears
encountered in a lava flow 18 km. northwest of
Morelia. The date of the flow is unknown, but
maize was probably known to the Tarascans when
they settled in the Sierra and the northern
plateau.

The provenience of maize cultivated by the
early Tarascans is but a small part of the complex
and obscure movements of corn from a secondary
center of origin in southern Mexico or northern
Central America.³⁰ Anderson (1946 a) has de-
scribed three distinct races of *Zea mays* in central
Mexico: (1) the Mexican Pyramidal, centering in
the eastern highlands; (2) Mexican Narrow Ear,
found in western Mexico, particularly in both cold
and hot lands of Jalisco and Nayarit; and (3)
Mountain Yellow, a high altitude maize (usually
above 7,000 ft.) encountered in purest form in the
highlands of western Mexico.³¹ Located between

³⁰ See Mangelsdorf and Cameron (1942) on the hybridization of South
American primitive maize and *Tripsacum* in Middle America.

³¹ Following is a brief description of the above races as given by Anderson
(1946 a, p. 171): (1) Mexican Pyramidal. Ears short, tapering regularly butt
to tip; row number high to very high (18-24). Kernels dented and pointed.
Color prevalently white and pale yellow. Plants short, pronounced inter-
venal red or purple coloring. Shallow root system, leaves broad and pubes-
cent. Tassels with few or no branches. (2) Mexican Narrow Ear. Ears
narrow, long, irregularly long-tapered, compressed at butt. Low row num-